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ART

Highlighting The Artists of Meow Wolf Houston: Adela Andea

A look at Adela Andea's artistic exploration of light and maximalism.

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JULY 24, 2024



Artist Adela Andea smiling amongst her work. Photo by Laura Lea Nalle.

As [Meow Wolf Houston](#) is being built out, we are highlighting some of the artists who are working on this new location. Bringing artists from an array of different backgrounds is part of Meow Wolf's intention, creating a space where creatives can bring their truest selves to the experience.

[Adela Andea](#) is a Romanian-American artist and sculptor whose work consists of immersive light installations using the latest technologies in the computer and light industry, mass produced objects, 3D printing, laser technology and a variety of other processes and materials. Having a multi-faceted background that began with specializing in computer graphics, then attending law school in Romania, Andea's artistic career evolved a traditional route from the get go. I asked her

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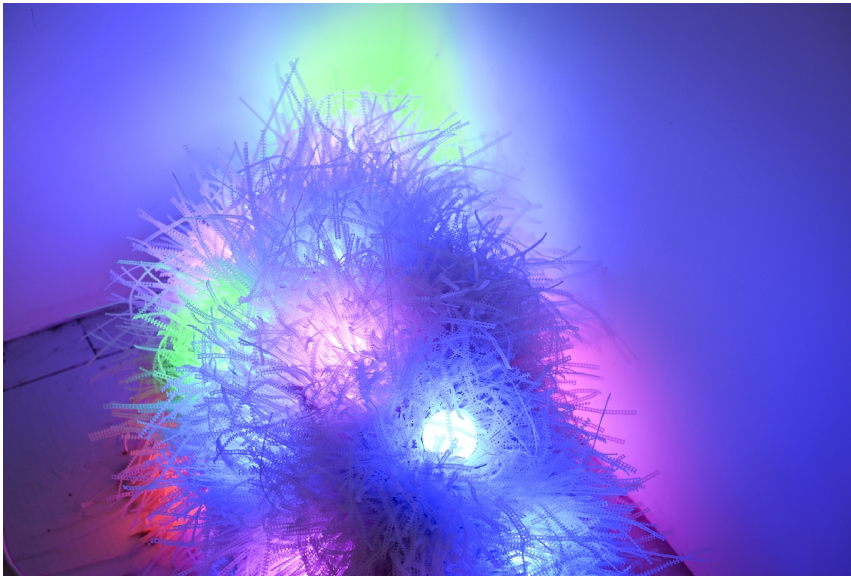
about what it meant to be an artist in what was communist Romania. She explained, "Unless you paint something that's acceptable to them, you can't be an artist." In many ways, during that era of Eastern European communism, parallel to the Soviet Union, being an artist was a way to have cultural privilege or capital. It wasn't an easy path to casually take on.

She elaborated on life in Romania, "There was no food - you were waiting in long lines, and there was no electricity. I remember doing my homework using oil lamps. I only recently started talking about this in the last year, but I sleep with the light on. I want the light on me. I don't want to sleep in the dark."



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A piece of Adela Andea's work, utilizing light in different ways. Photo by Laura Lea Nalle.

By the '90s, Andea had gotten married. Her husband won the green card "lottery", which, she expressed, was really a system that chose people based on "talent" or merit. They landed in Los Angeles by the time Adela was 21, and she continued work as a paralegal for five years. She described her time working at the law firm as enriching, as she supported cases that ended up in the Supreme Court. When her mentor expressed that she was afraid of losing Adela because she was having a baby, Adela replied, "No, you're going to lose me because I'm going to go back to art school."





Adela looking upon her work. Photo by Laura Lea Nalle.

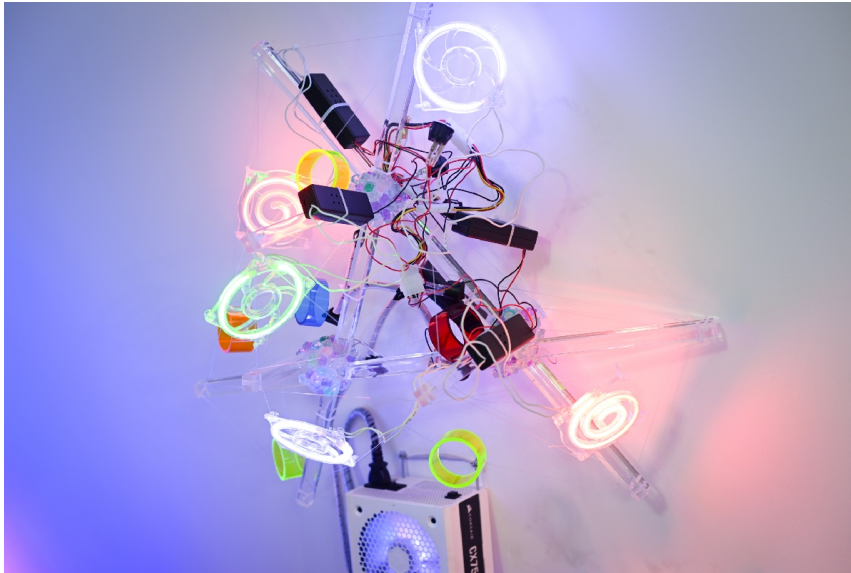
With her new pursuit of her true passion, Andea tried a couple art programs in California until she decided to pursue a BFA in Painting at the University of Houston in Houston, TX. Still looking for another program to complete, she was recruited to University of North Texas's three year New Media program, which consisted of sculpture, painting and new media. Andea's attention to detail and love for technology continued to combine forces as she finally began her artistic exploration of light– the very thing that her past had lacked.



A piece of Adela Andea's work using human-made materials. Photo by Laura Lea Nalle.

Venturing into installation art was not an easy feat. Andea reflected on her journey, "Installation was important to me because it was not that popular when I started." She continued, "It's fully immersive, basically right now more than ever because we are in a consumer society and we have all this **stuff**." This stuff is what makes up her work, with her aim to physically create a natural landscape through human-made materials. It remains important to illuminate the natural world.

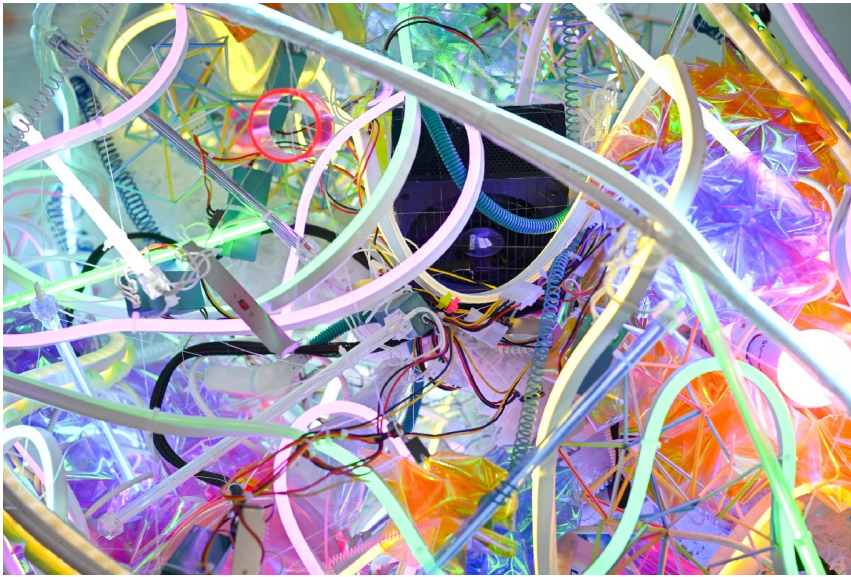
She said, "Everything is neon. That's what light installation usually means: neon. Most of it, not everybody, but a lot use neon light. And I didn't want to do that. I just said, **why use neon?** We have new technologies and we have had LED since the '50s. Nobody used it because nobody was concerned about saving energy until we started talking about the environment. So for me, LED became immediately important to promote along with new technologies. I used computer parts, so I use the CCFL, the cold cathode fluorescent light."



An example of Adela's work with LED. Photo by Laura Lea Nalle.

Andea also commits to work that is unabashedly colorful, something that can be associated with femininity and judged by the oftentimes patriarchal fine art community. Andea is a maximalist - actively resisting high art expectations of minimalism, white lighting and monotonous art that doesn't challenge the norm. She explained, "There's the fine art world that you want. There's this element of ***I made it, I'm successful.*** But then it's like, ***Oh my God, I can barely breathe.*** And then you work with something like Meow Wolf, which is basically saying ***f*ck you*** to the whole institution, and you're like, ***Oh my God, I can relax.***"

What's helpful with her current collaboration with Meow Wolf is feeling endless possibilities in her work in Houston. She explained, "There's no restrictions. I mean, they [Meow Wolf] are very professional, but they're very respectful towards the process because it's hard as an artist - everybody just thinks it happens overnight."



A close up look at one of Adela's pieces. Photo by Laura Lea Nalle.

It isn't just the beauty of Meow Wolf's openness, it's also all the artists that are brought to this very exhibition. Andea raves about the collaborations, of working with artists she's known about for 15 years, but never had the chance to talk to or work alongside. She said, "When you put so many artists together, they are a movement. In many ways they've [Meow Wolf] adapted a genre. There's a genre to the art."

As Adela's art finds a new home to exist in all its color in [Meow Wolf Houston opening later this year](#), she continues to reside in Texas with her family, teaching students Clement Greenberg's "[Avant Garde and Kitsch](#)", while creating light in everything she does.



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